



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • MONDAY • MARCH 29, 2021 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 32 • LATE CITY EDITION



READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/newindianexpress
twitter.com/newindianexpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress



439 PROJECTS GET THE NOD IN MoEF's LOCKDOWN OVERDRIVE

The Environment Ministry's expert appraisal committee took up 837 proposals, the highest in past 3 years, and rejected one

COMMITTEE HURRIED THROUGH SCRUTINY?

Bi-monthly virtual meetings between April and May saw around 200 projects getting the EAC approval. This means the panel had only 2-4 days to deliberate on the projects, leading to some members saying that they were given very less time to scrutinise the proposals. Among the proposals given expedited nod was the one for the country's new Parliament building

MINISTRY CLEARS THE AIR ON SITE VISITS

- Clearing doubts over site visits during the pandemic, the ministry said sub-panels carried out inspections, when required by the EAC
- EAC in mining, infrastructure, thermal power and hydel projects in CRZ had considered 822 and 798 projects in 2019 and 2018
- Gujarat topped the list of states with most number of approvals

466

PROJECTS APPROVED BY EAC IN 2019; THE NUMBER WAS 436 IN 2018

K'taka breaches 3,000-mark in new Covid cases; CM to take stock today

Meeting will discuss steps to contain spread of virus as concerns heighten over rising cases



A health worker takes a swab sample at the Kempegowda Bus Station in Bengaluru on Sunday | SHIRIRAM BH

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

AFTER four months, Karnataka recorded 3,082 new Covid-19 cases in a single day on Sunday with 12 deaths, taking the total positive cases to 9,87,012 and the death toll to 12,504. The state's active cases too have surged from 7,342 as on January 23 to 23,037 on Sunday.

Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar attributed the surge to a mutated variant of the SARS-CoV2 virus which has been spreading in the state. "From 300 cases per day, the figures have shot up to 3,000, which is a ten-fold increase. Strict restrictions will be placed at border districts and also on those travelling to Bengaluru. The Home Department will be responsible for this and all these matters were discussed with Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday to prevent the situation from turning into a disaster," he said.

"Hospitals will be burdened if cases increase and the number of deaths will also be proportional to the number of people testing positive. The next 4 to 8 weeks will require strict measures, the Covid-19 Technical Advisory Committee has advised. These will be communicated to Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa in a meeting on Monday along with other ministers," Sudhakar said.

The CM has called for a meeting on Monday evening at his home office 'Krishna' where most cabinet ministers, health and BBMP officials will put their heads together to work out an effective strategy to fight the spike in Covid numbers.

CONTINUED ON: P3

Karnataka Second Wave BATTLE

1,06,328
Total samples tested on Sunday

3,082
Test positive on Sunday

TOP 3 DISTRICTS WITH MOST POSITIVES

2,004
Bengaluru

199
Kolar

115
Udupi

33,83,872
People vaccinated so far

Limited lockdown coming in M'rashtra

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mumbai/New Delhi

WITH Maharashtra's Covid-19 positive cases continuing to grow exponentially, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday directed the state's health task force to prepare a detailed lockdown plan that would have minimum impact on the economy.

Minister Nawab Malik confirmed plans for a limited lockdown without major impact on economic activities. "Industries where large number of people gather, which could increase the virus spread, may have to follow stringent guidelines while manufacturing units will function without any impact," Malik added.

The meeting convened by the CM was attended among others by the health minister, health secretary and members of the health task force. Apparently, current measures like restricted mobility in public areas and places of work as also night curfews, have not slowed down the pace of infections.

The health secretary informed the CM that there is shortage of beds and ventilators in some parts of the state.

Last year on September 17, there were three lakh active patients and 31,351 deaths. But now, as of Saturday, there are 3.30 lakh active patients and the cumulative toll is 54,073.

"The task force said the toll could climb, especially due to delay in hospitalisation without timely testing and non-compliance of the home isolation protocol. On March 27, as many as 35,726 patients with infection were detected and this number might touch 40,000 in the next 24 hours," the health department said.

Amid the spike, officials in Pune and Chennai plan to assess whether people with a history of infection are getting re-infected. In the first such exercise in India, they have decided to look for IgG antibodies in newly infected people. The antibody IgG typically appears nearly 14 days after exposure to the virus and lasts for several months. P7

GALLOPING RATE

Cases in last 24 hours ending Sunday morning	
Maharashtra	15,726
Chhattisgarh	3,162
Punjab	2,405
Gujarat	2,276
Madhya Pradesh	2,142
Tamil Nadu	2,089
Kerala	2,055

62,714
Fresh Covid positive cases registered in India in a day

24 crore+
Tests for Covid-19 conducted across India so far

4.97%
Cumulative positivity rate so far

Corona infects mouth cells, can cause blisters

IFFATH FATHIMA @ Bengaluru

WHILE it's known that the upper airways and lungs are sites of Covid-19 infection, and that the virus can infect various parts of body such as the digestive system, blood vessels and kidneys, a new study by an international team of experts has revealed that the Novel Coronavirus infects the mouth cells which causes dryness in the mouth, loss of taste and blisters. Health professionals in

Karnataka concur with the findings.

The study was published in Nature Medicine on March 25. "The potential of the virus to infect multiple areas of the body might help explain the wide-ranging symptoms experienced by Covid-19 patients, including oral symptoms such as taste loss, dry mouth and blistering. Moreover, the findings point to the possibility that the mouth plays a role in transmitting SARS-CoV2 to the lungs or

digestive system via saliva laden with virus from infected oral cells," the study says.

Dr Sharon Colaco Dias, HoD and Consultant, Dental Medicine, Manipal Hospital, Old Airport Road, pointed out that she had seen a Covid-19 case where the patient had blisters in the soft palate. "Covid-19 has been associated with vascular irregularities due to viral damage of blood vessels. The virus gains entry into the endothelial cells that line blood vessels via the

ACE2 receptor and damages them, leading to oxygen deprivation. Tissue necrosis, including blisters, can be the result of vessel damage. Case reports have been cited in the literature that show confirmed Covid-19 patients having oral ulcerations that were suspected to be caused by the SARS-CoV2 virus."

To determine if the virus in the saliva is infectious, the researchers exposed saliva of eight asymptomatic Covid patients to healthy cells grown in a dish. P3

₹6,000 farmers' dole will apply to fisherfolk too

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ TPuram

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said the Centre will provide an assistance of ₹6,000 per year to fisherfolk on the lines of the aid currently given to farmers under the Prime Minister Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme. The BJP's manifesto in Bengal and Puducherry have already promised to replicate the annual assistance of ₹6,000 given to farmers for fishermen as well if it comes to power.

"Under the scheme, our government is transferring ₹6,000 per year to the bank accounts of farmers across

the country. We will transfer ₹6,000 to the bank accounts of fishermen as well and effectively implement the Central scheme," said Rajnath, who was in Thiruvananthapuram as part of the NDA's election campaign.

Last year, the fisheries minister had urged the PM to extend the benefits of the scheme to about 20 million fishermen in the country.

Later, he termed the Kerala government's decision to institute a judicial inquiry against Central agencies probing gold smuggling and related cases as 'unconstitutional' and said it was a challenge to India's federal structure.



GROWTH ENGINE

Railways' infra spend set to touch ₹1.6 L cr this fiscal

S LALITHA @ Bengaluru

THE 2020-2021 fiscal has been one of huge achievement for the Indian Railways on numerous fronts, including infrastructure development, freight and electrification, according to Suneet Sharma, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Railway Board.

In an exclusive interaction with The New Indian Express, Sharma said the capital expenditure (capex) on infrastructure development during the current financial year was far higher than the previous years. "We expect a capex of ₹1.61 lakh crore. If you look back, the average capex used to be in the range of ₹45,000-50,000 crore in Indian Railways."

On the electrification front, Railways covered between 4,000-4,500 km during an average year. "We already covered 4,900 km (up to March 26) and around 25 inspections of railway sections are lined up before March 31. We expect to do 6,000 km of electrification this year, the highest ever in a year by the Indian Railways," the chairman said.

On the lines of air cargo traffic, freight transportation is proving to be a steady revenue grosser. P5

EXPRESS READ

CD-gate: Woman set to appear before SIT today

Bengaluru: The woman in the alleged CD-gate video, which also allegedly involves former minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, is expected to appear before the SIT investigating the case on Monday. P4

WITH THIS ISSUE
THE ESSENTIAL CAMPUS DIGEST

edex

32 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF edex (TABLOID) & 4 of City Express



'NEP IS LIKE KHICHDI'

The new National Education Policy is like a khichdi, said BJP MP Subramanian Swamy on the third day of the ThinkEdu Conclave 2021. Though it tried to do a lot to correct the colonial hangover, it didn't quite make it, he added | P5

BETTER LIFE

Helping them overcome Covid blues, UNDP finds jobs for many youths

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN an effort to bridge the unemployment gap post the Covid-19 lockdown and its impact, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) recovery measures have seen at least 1,488 people placed in private sector jobs, mainly in Bengaluru and Mysuru, across sectors like e-commerce, logis-

tics, manufacturing, telecom and retail.

The highest salary that people were placed at was ₹25,000 per month. By March 31, the recovery programme aims at placing 2,500 young people in Karnataka, and 6,000 people across the country.

The programme is being carried out in collaboration with the state government and district administration, Karnata-

ka Small Scale Industries Association (KASSIA), Peenya Industries Association (PIA), Mysore Industries Association (MIA) and other MSMEs in Karnataka. Magic Bus India Foundation is UNDP's partner agency in this initiative.

The recovery measures were initiated after considering that the soaring levels of unemployment had made re-employment of workers from the in-



formal economy essential.

The employment recovery programme ensures access to

job opportunities for vulnerable and the most-affected youth and adults in select districts of Karnataka. The Covid-19 pandemic caused widespread socio-economic disorder which left an inevitable impact on the vulnerable sections, especially from the informal sector, the education system and the economy as a whole.

The lockdowns further impacted incomes and liveli-

hoods, and the limited savings have made survival extremely difficult for families living in poverty, UNDP officials said.

Moreover, the World Economic Situation and Prospects report by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has stated that high unemployment caused by the pandemic in 2020 is set to continue in 2021.

CONTINUED ON: P5